



FILMUNIVERSITÄT
BABELSBERG
KONRAD WOLF



LAND
BRANDENBURG
Ministerium für Wissenschaft,
Forschung und Kultur

**Junior Research Group Jewish Film –
International Online-Workshop 2023: Call for Papers**

**Judaism and Jewish Religiosity on Screen in the 21st Century: New
Approaches to the Study of Productions, Representations & Discourses**

July 5-6, 2023

Hosted by the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany

Deadline for submissions: March 31, 2023

Keynote speaker: Yaron Peleg, Cambridge University

**Judaism and Jewish Religiosity on Screen in the 21st Century: New Approaches to the
Study of contemporary Productions, Representations & Discourses**

Religion and film are deeply intertwined and studies of their various entanglements have been published worldwide (Nayar 2014; Brent Plate 2017; Solano 2022). Such is the case with Judaism and film. Traditionally, representation of Judaism refers to the multifold forms of Jewish religious practice, most prominently its conservative, orthodox or ultra-Orthodox denominations. In the 20th Century, Christian Bible movies (Reinhartz 2013), movies about the Holocaust (Brownstein 2021) and movies located in traditional Eastern European Jewish religious milieus based on Yiddish writings, made up the majority of films focusing on Jewish religiosity. More recently, however, given the growing role of religion in Israel, and the rising number of conservative orthodox Jewish communities in Western countries including USA, Canada, UK, France, Australia and South Africa from the turn of the 21th century onwards, the presentation/treatment of Orthodox Judaism on screen has likewise changed. Recent

years have seen a steady increase in depictions of orthodox Judaism in Israeli cinema and television (Chyutin 2011, Peleg 2016). Globally distributed productions about ultra-Orthodox Jews, such as Netflix's *Shtisel*, *Unorthodox* and *My Unorthodox Life*, have prompted discussions about a new "golden age of Haredi television" (Dolsten 2022).

This trend might be explained by various factors: 1) the growing 'religification' of Jewish Israeli society, 2) the increased commercialization of Judaism, especially in its orthodox forms, as commodities on a globalized SVOD market, 3) the newly-won access of religious filmmakers to the means of film production and distribution. First and foremost, the representation of Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy, known by the title Haredi—a significant minority in Israeli, North American, European and Australian society—has come into focus in popular culture in media including novels, theater productions, and contemporary films. The growing demographic, political, economic and social impact of Haredi Jewry on Jewish and non-Jewish societies is reflected in films, documentaries, television and SVOD series. Beyond orthodox denominations, liberal and progressive Jewish religious life has been represented in recent televisual productions, such as Amazon's *Transparent* or Comedy Central's *Broad City*.

The study of Judaism and religious practice in film and television presents various challenges. To analyze this field, this workshop aims to encompass multiple perspectives. At the core are the following discussion questions:

- What is a film *about* Judaism and Jewish religiosity?
- What methods are useful when examining Judaism/Jewish religiosity and film?
- How are different religious Jewish denominations (from liberal to ultra-Orthodox) represented, and in what genres (drama, comedy, fantasy, sci-fi, horror, thriller, film noir, bible movie etc.)?
- What customs, rituals, traditions, religious laws or gender relations are addressed and represented in movies that treat Jewish religious life?
- In what way do films that treat Jewish religious life create, reproduce, enforce or dismantle images of the various religious groups and denominations?
- How does contemporary film aestheticize Jewish religious life?
- What conflicts are found in the interpretation of Jewish religious practice and its political, economic, and social representations in film/ television/ SVOD?

The workshop will take place online, in the form of conversation panels. Presenters are invited to give brief 15 minute presentations to prompt discussion with fellow researchers.

Submission may include, but are not limited to, the following research fields/topics:

- Theories on Judaism and film in the 21st century
- Aesthetics of films about Judaism in 21st century
- History of the filmic representation of certain Jewish religious traditions, rites, and customs
- Representation of recent Jewish religious radicalism, extremism, and fundamentalism in fiction movies/ documentary / television and SVOD series
- (Trans)national networks of production and distribution of films on Judaism
- Censorship and debates around films on Judaism
- Confessional Jewish film production
- Educational films on Jewish religious denominations

Submission

Researchers from cinema, visual and media studies, sociology, study of religion, theology, history and other disciplines are invited to submit proposals for contributions by March 31, 2023 to e.doedtmann@filmuniversitaet.de. Submissions should include the name of the speaker/participant, an email address, a title and abstract for the paper (max. 300 words with not more than 5 references) and a short bio (max. 150 words). Notification of participation will be sent out by late April, 2023.

The workshop will be held in English and is planned as a two-day online event.

Please address all inquiries to e.doedtmann@filmuniversitaet.de

About the workshop organizer:

Eik Doedtmann (PhD in Jewish Studies), Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, is the author of *Freedom of Defection: The Representation of Ultra-Orthodox Jews and Netflix's Unorthodox* (forthcoming in: Dunleavy T and Weissman E (2023): *TV Drama in the Multiplatform Era: Transnational Co-Production and Cultural Specificity*. London: Palgrave MacMillan) and *The Haredim in Israel at the beginning of the 21st century - The implications of the Status quo between State and ultra-Orthodoxy* (Berlin: Bebra 2021, in German).